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FOR EUR DAS ROSEMARY DICARLO, AF/S - DAN MOZENA AND LINDA MUNCY

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: LESOTHO: U.S. POSITION ON KOSOVO'S STATUS

REF: STATE 24360

This is an action message. See para. 3.

11. (C) Ambassador delivered reftel demarche concerning the introduction of a U.S. resolution granting Kosovo independence to Lesotho's newly-appointed Foreign Minister Kenneth Tsekoa on April 4. She provided the key points, notably the fact that Kosovo has experienced eight years of United Nations Administration, that the UN Secretary General had appointed former Finnish President Ahtisaari as his Special Envoy to lead the Kosovo status process and that a key objective of the UN process was to protect the minority Serbs. (Kosovo's great majority -- 90 percent -- is made up of Albanians who want independence). The position of the United States and the European Union, she continued, was that it is reasonable, at this time, to consider independence for Kosovo in light of the fact that any attempt to reintegrate it into Serbia would result in violence. Qe UN SpecialQnvoy himself had made a report to the Secretary General, she advised the Foreign Minister, that independence was the only solution and even with such status, a NATO team would remain for such a transition. The U.S., she noted, planned to offer a new resolution to the UN Security Council and we believe Kosovo's independence, given the eight years of international presence to resolve the internal ethnic and international problem, would be the next appropriate step, and we wanted to bring this issue to the member states to inform them and also seek their support.

12. (C) The Foreign Minister agreed that the length of time the UN Administration and that of the Special Envoy had to bring peace and stability to Kosovo was indeed sufficient. Minister Tsekoa stated that it would be logical to move forward with

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independence for Kosovo at this time. We added, in the course of our discussion, that there had been an interest by the Russians in extending the Special Envoy for another fifteen months, but, also, that we are engaging the Russian Government and hope that they can be persuaded, as others have already been, that the solution recommended by the UNSYG's Special Envoy remains the most sensible at this time; we hope to have the full support of the Security Council in that regard. Tsekoa stated that he would apprise the Prime Minister of the situation and of our resolution, which he thought was the best next step given the circumstances, and that he would advise us on Lesotho's final position.

13. (C) Comment: Minister Tsekoa is a seasoned diplomat and grasped right away the heart of the matter. He also said that he would instruct Lesotho's Permanent Representative in the UN to discuss the Kosovo matter and the Special Envoy's report with his U.S. counterparts in New York. Post recommends that USUN representatives seek out Lesotho's Permanent Representative, Ambassador Fine Maema, to engage him as quickly as possible

since he, along with all of the other Basotho abroad, will be called back to Maseru in the near future for consultations as the re-elected Lesotho Congress for Democracy has regained the reigns of government, and will be briefing all of their representatives and likely making changes in their position over the next few weeks. End Comment.

PERRY